

## **Classical Spark #1: Getting Started**

--Craig Curtis

Below are some thoughts on midday promotion and a number of ideas gleaned from Classical Music Rising stations for you to use and adapt as you like.

But first... consult your **Branding Checklist!**

**Identify your station clearly and consistently: Station name, dial position, and short descriptor of your core benefit.** Use it all the time. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. This is building block A.

If you do *not* have a clear identifier and brand positioner that is used constantly and consistently on-air and in your off-air services and material, step away from this note, take your phone off the hook, set your to-do list aside, and take care of that now. Consult with colleagues or check out the sections on identification and positioning in Classical Spark's *Best Practices Guide*.

Now, **here are some initial ideas for implementing Classical Spark on your airwaves.** While **we are focusing this campaign on middays, our format's most-listened to daypart**, these ideas can be adapted to other dayparts if you prefer to focus elsewhere.

### **Midday Liners**

Several Classical Music Rising stations have developed liners and promotional themes targeted at midday listening. Many of these deal with **listening "at work" or "in the office"**, which is an obvious thing to do. Classical music and the other adult listening formats (Oldies, Smooth Jazz, Adult AC, etc.) have always been successful "at work" formats. However, many listeners in the older part of the classical audience may be retired, semi-retired, or working from home, so it's good to think about additional or more inclusive language that may frame middays as the **"busy time of day"**, or takes into account a larger range of "work places", which can include a traditional office, home office, garage, or even the back garden.

Here's a sample list of liners and promotional themes used by classical stations:

- Your classical companion...at work/at the office. (WDAV, and others)
- Perfectly tuned to your workday. (WETA)

- Your best friend at the office. (WETA)
- Lighten your workload. (WETA)
- Great music, all day. (KING)
- Great music, at work. (KING and WRTI)
- Great music, all week long. (KBSU)
- Transform your day. (KDFC)
- The soundtrack to your day. (WQXR)
- The soundtrack to your day starts now... (WQXR)
- Make your busy day a better day. (WQXR)
- Stay composed and focused with classical music. (KDFC)
- Listen while you work. (KDFC)
- Stay composed. Classical music while you work. (KUSC)
- When your workday could use some sanity, there's (insert calls)... (KDFC)
- At home, in the car, in the office... (KBSU)
- Rise above it all... (WETA)
- Classical music on (insert calls), because everybody needs some sanity at work...
- Your oasis of sanity... (All Classical Portland)
- Push the reset button... (KING)
- Make (insert calls) your home for music during the busy part of the day – at home, at work, in the car – wherever you are. (WFMT)
- (Insert calls), great music, and good company, at work, every day.

**Stations use liners and promotional themes in one of three ways:**

- 1) They pick a liner and use it almost exclusively for a long period of time, years or even decades (see the “1010 Wins” example in the *Best Practices Guide*)
- 2) They pick a group of liners to cycle through in rotation, usually focusing on one at a time
- 3) They pick a group of messages, designating one as primary liner that remains in constant use, while rotating through other messages as needed. The last model seems to be the one most frequently used by classical music stations and public radio news stations. **It’s best to limit a rotation of liners to no more than three or four** at any given time, while clearly designating one as primary, and controlling the rotating use of the others.

Regardless of the liners or themes you choose, **use them in as many ways as you can—in station breaks, as part of your legal IDs, as tag lines to live and produced promos, as themes for promotional spots**, etc. And don’t forget off-air. Your primary liner should appear on your web site, in social media, advertising, and in your print and membership material.

Let’s take **WDAV’s use of “Your classical companion...”** as an example. It clearly identifies the format and stresses WDAV as “good company”, using “companion”, a word that resonates warmly with listeners and even calls to mind one of public radio’s defining programs. It can easily be modified to suit dayparts or other ideas. WDAV regularly completes “Your classical companion” by adding phrases such as, at home, at work, in the car, on the weekend, for the commute, for the holidays, etc.

**Good liners can also contribute themes to positioning, program or daypart promotion.** Using the “classical companion” idea, you could do a promo like this:

Everybody needs company at work. Good company makes the day go faster and the work go better. Good company like Bach, Mozart, and Brahms. And WDAV’s Matt Rogers, who’s here to keep you company every workday.

89.9 WDAV, your classical companion...at work.

I like the double meaning of “at work” here, referring to the listener being at work (location), while WDAV is at work (activity) for the listener.

Here are a few other ideas for promoting listening at work. **These can appear as short positioning “drops” (mentions) or scripted :15 or :30-second spots.**

*(SFX/Music: Whistling the first phrase of “Whistle While You Work,” transitioning to whistling first phrase of “Eine kleine Nachtmusic,” transitioning to orchestra)*

V/O: Whistle while you work...A little Mozart, that is. Every day on (insert frequency and calls)

Here's a fun midday spot done by John Birge at Minnesota Public Radio:

The other day while I was goofing off...er...hard at work at my desk (*SFX: computer keyboard clicking easing into music bed*), I noticed something. The computer keyboard has a button that says 'escape.' And I thought, wouldn't it be great if your life had an escape button? Then it occurred to me—there *is* an escape button. On the radio. Right *here*. (*Finish with personalized tag promoting specific show or daypart.*)

And here are two quick drops on weekday listening from KDFC and KUSC:

The workday doesn't begin until Mozart says it does. Transform your day with Mozart in the morning at nine, on KDFC and KDFC-dot-com.

The distance between nine and five? It's a lot shorter when you spend your workday with Classical KUSC.

Finally a few thoughts on **promo scheduling and placement**.

Taking our lead from the NPR Spark, **we are suggesting that you commit to promoting middays about 100 times per week on your station**. 100 happens to be

- A) A nice round memorable number,
- B) Close to the OES (Optimal Effective Schedule) spot run for most stations,
- C) About once an hour through the week.

These promos can be anything from brief mentions to produced :15 and :30-second spots. Most stations find that a rotation that includes about four or five produced spots combined with live reads provides consistency of message and enough variety to avoid listener fatigue. Sample approaches, as outlined in Classical Spark's Project Description, include midday **Programming Tie-ins**, the station/host as a **Companion to Daily Activities**, **Listener Testimonials**, highlighting the **Core Benefits and Emotional Benefits of listening to classical music**, and **reminders to listen on the radio, online, and via your station's free mobile app**.

There is a science to scheduling promos for **Optimum Effective Scheduling (OES)**, but do not overthink the process. Come up with some good promos, and just run 'em. Over time we should be able to build up a strong inventory of evergreen or seasonally reusable spots along with a good supply of fresh material. For now, let's get started with upping the promotional ante, so to speak – i.e. increasing the inventory devoted to identifying your station's benefits and driving midday tune-ins.